

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

HELEN WELLS WILSON &
BESS WELLS PARIS

AUGUST 19, 1991

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-23

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR





Bess Wells Paris and Helen Wells Wilson

August 21, 1991
(National Park Service photo 322:7)

EDITORIAL NOTICE

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Helen Wells Wilson, Bess Wells Paris, and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2000. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

RESTRICTION

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ABSTRACT

As the daughters of William Gates Wells, first cousin of Bess W. Truman, Helen Wells Wilson and Bess Wells Paris grew up within the extended Gates family that stretched from Independence to Platte City and Kansas City, Missouri. The Wells sisters discuss their branch of the family tree in Platte City, Missouri, including their grandmother Maud Louise Gates Wells and her children, as well as the occasions in which they would visit with Bess, Harry, and Margaret Truman, usually when the Trumans would visit Platte City. They identify and discuss photos from family albums found in the Truman home and now at the Truman Library. The interview proceeds to their family's memorable visit to Washington and the White House in 1947 and to other contacts with the Trumans during the presidency. They discuss their education at the University of Missouri, share more details about their Wells relatives in Platte City, and provide information about their husbands' and children. In doing so, the Wells sisters provide glimpses into the often overlooked but significant ties that Bess Truman cherished with her Platte City relatives.

Persons mentioned: William Gates Wells, Annie Loretta Morton Wells, Maud Louise Gates Wells, Madge Gates Wallace, Bess W. Truman, Myra Gates Wallace, Helen Wallace, John Wallace, Myra Sue Wallace Barker, Louise Wells Hull, Natalie Ott Wallace, May Wallace, D. Frederick Wallace, Oscar Wells, George Porterfield Wallace, William Strother "Bob" Wells, Margaret Truman Daniel, Katherine Wells, Lee "Pete" Hull, James Wells Hull, Ann Louise Wells White, William Elliott Wells, Elsie Wells, Susie Wells, Sue Hull, William Strother Wells, Jr., Harry S Truman, Nelson Eddy, Mamie Eisenhower, William Strother, Elmer Ellis, Vietta Garr, Clifton Truman Daniel, Harrison Gates Daniel, Thomas Washington Daniel, William Wallace Daniel, John E. Wilson, John Wells Wilson, William Strother Wilson, Louise Wilson Valuck, Bernice Wells, Carolyn Wells, Robert Paris, Ann Frances Paris Jury, Clifford Jury, Helen Frances Jury, Robert Gates Paris, Samuel Wells Paris, Frank Gates Wallace, Mary Jane Truman, J. Vivian Truman, G. Walter Gates, Maud Louise Gates Drake.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
HELEN WELLS WILSON & BESS WELLS PARIS**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1991-23

JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Bess Paris and Helen Wilson. We're in Columbia, Missouri, on August 21, 1991. The interviewer is Jim Williams from the National Park Service, and Scott Stone from the National Park Service is running the recorders.

Well, I guess we'll start with a little bit of family background about your side of Mrs. Truman's family. First of all, could you tell me when and where you were born, and then we'll go back from there, I guess. The oldest first.

HELEN WILSON: Well, I'm the older, so I'll tell you that I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in October of 1929.

BESS PARIS: And I was born also in Kansas City in April of 1935.

WILLIAMS: So people listening to the tape will know, the older voice is Helen and the younger voice is Bess's. Who were your parents?

PARIS: William Gates Wells and Annie Morton Wells.

WILLIAMS: And how are you related to Bess Truman?

PARIS: Our Grandmother Wells was Madge Wallace's sister. They were the Gates sisters, and Bess Truman and our father were first cousins.

WILLIAMS: How far back do you personally remember your relatives, the Gates—Wells relatives?

WILSON: Well.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you remember—Did you know your grandparents?

PARIS: The grandparents—Our grandparents were dead before I was born.

WILSON: I remember my grandmother, Myra. No, not Myra.

PARIS: Maud.

WILSON: Maud. And only as, you know, for a short time. I don't remember my grandfather at all.

WILLIAMS: What do you remember about your grandmother? Or what do you know about her just from other people?

WILSON: Well, my—our grandmother was just quite a lady. I guess all three Gates girls were very similar. They were very dignified, very reserved. And as far as I know, all three of them wore the black velvet band with a cameo. And it's—I always remember that.

PARIS: Do you remember Myra?

WILSON: No, I don't remember Myra.

PARIS: There was Maud, Madge, and Myra.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much contact with—

PARIS: Madge?

WILLIAMS: Myra and her family?

WILSON: No. Well, I remember Myra, but not well. And then she had two children, Helen and John, and I remember Helen and John very well. And you used to visit with them a lot, with John's daughter Myra Sue.

PARIS: Myra Sue, who was my age—or is my age—and we played back and forth.

WILSON: Myra had a home over on Gladstone Boulevard, a big stone home, that we used to go over to family reunions to. And then after she died, then

Helen and John moved to the farm over in Liberty.

PARIS: Mhm, mhm.

WILLIAMS: What has happened to them?

PARIS: They're both dead. Myra Sue lives in California.

WILSON: Helen never married, and John just had one child, Myra Sue.

PARIS: I can give you her address if you would like it.

WILLIAMS: Okay, that would be nice, because we really don't know much about that sister.

PARIS: That side, uh-huh.

WILSON: That side, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: And we know more about the Wellses because we've heard all through the years that the Trumans would visit or the Wallaces would visit up in Platte City and vice versa.

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What's the family tradition about the Gates family and where they came from? Do you know much about that?

WILSON: You mean before they came to Independence? No, I don't. Do you, Bess?

PARIS: No.

WILSON: All I remember is after they had arrived, and the family business was the milling company, Waggoner-Gates, and . . . I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Do you know how your Grandmother Maud met your grandfather? And that was William Strother [mispronounces as "Struther"]?

WILSON: William Strother [pronounces with a short "o" sound]. No, I don't.

PARIS: No, I don't know that either.

WILLIAMS: I just wonder how they came to Platte City from Independence.

WILSON: No, I don't.

WILLIAMS: While we're in the older generation, the Truman Library acquired some photographs from our attic before we came along. I think they were able to identify most of the people, but maybe you can recognize . . . Do you know this house [see appendix, item 1]?

PARIS: That's the family home.

WILLIAMS: In Platte City?

PARIS: Oh, no. No, I don't know that house.

WILSON: I don't know what that . . .

PARIS: Beg your pardon. I was thinking it was the house in Independence.

WILSON: You were thinking of 219 North Delaware.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Do you know these people?

PARIS: That looks like Theodore Roosevelt. [chuckling]

WILSON: Well, that looks like the house there.

WILLIAMS: The Trumans', you mean?

WILSON: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: It's not.

WILSON: It's not?

WILLIAMS: Well, it . . .

WILSON: It looks like it.

WILLIAMS: Maybe it is.

WILSON: If it isn't, I don't know what it is. It isn't the Wells . . .

WILLIAMS: No, the porch isn't right. They identified the people in it as Maud Gates Wells, Madge Gates Wallace, and Maud's husband Strother. I don't know how they identified it.

PARIS: Oh, identified it as . . . and this was Strother?

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. It's a real creepy picture, I think, the way the people are standing there like mannequins in the yard. [chuckling]

WILSON: They are.

PARIS: I say that looks like Theodore Roosevelt. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And you can read on the back, somebody surmised that this was the family home of the Wells up in Platte City.

PARIS: No, no. It isn't.

WILSON: Definitely not.

PARIS: It is not.

WILLIAMS: So you don't recognize these people.

PARIS: No.

WILSON: No.

WILLIAMS: And it's definitely not your grandmother and grandfather?

WILSON: Well, I mean, I don't know. I think it's. . . I think it's older than they were. No, I don't recognize them.

WILLIAMS: Okay. The ID cards are on the back.

WILSON: Is that Aunt Louise? Is one of these Aunt Louise?

WILLIAMS: Picture 70, it says: "Bess Wallace and her cousin Louise Wells." [see appendix, item 2]

WILSON: Uh-huh. That's Bess and that's Louise. And that's taken up with the old iron gate, isn't it? I mean, iron fence.

WILLIAMS: Which . . . ?

WILSON: No, no, no. Well, you see in Platte City they used to have a family home there. They had a beautiful iron fence—but I don't believe that's it—with the spikes. And I know that Aunt Louise donated it during World War II [chuckling], so it isn't there anymore.

WILLIAMS: For scrap?

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So you had . . .

WILSON: And 71 is Natalie Wallace [see appendix, item 2].

WILLIAMS: Is that . . . ?

PARIS: Yeah, it looks like her.

WILLIAMS: I think most of these were either guesses or people that May Wallace recognized. Could you tell me about your aunts and uncles?

WILSON: Aunt Louise?

WILLIAMS: And the rest of them. First of all, your father and mother were . . . ?

WILSON: Our father and mother were William Gates Wells and Annie Morton Wells. Now, in the Wells family, Louise Wells Hull was the oldest, and she had three brothers—our father and two uncles. And the same with Bess's family, as you well know. Bess was the oldest and with three younger brothers. And, ironically, they both . . . the girls, Bess and Louise, outlived all three of their brothers, which was rather amazing. Louise and Bess Truman were very, very close. And . . .

WILLIAMS: So they were cousins.

WILSON: They were first cousins, uh-huh. They were in each other's weddings.

PARIS: The Wells children spent a lot of time in Independence during the summer because of our grandmother's hay fever allergy. She went to Colorado for relief, and so, consequently, the children spent a lot of time back and forth.

WILLIAMS: I see.

PARIS: And they were close, fairly close in age.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Do you recognize any of these?

PARIS: I recognized Aunt Louise there in 76 [see appendix, item 3].

WILSON: That's Bess, and who's that?

PARIS: Fred.

WILSON: Oh, Fred. Hmm.

PARIS: And 75.

WILLIAMS: I wouldn't necessarily trust some of these, but I think we got these because they didn't know who the man on the crutches was.

PARIS: Well, I was going to say, was that, do you recognize who that might be?

WILLIAMS: Or the one by the car I wasn't sure about.

WILSON: The one up here? No, I don't.

WILLIAMS: They don't look like Wellses?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: Not as we remember them. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I realize it was before you . . . This is 82-265 [see appendix, item 4].

WILSON: Let me see, that's Oscar.

PARIS: That isn't Oscar Wells.

WILSON: That's not brother Oscar Wells. No.

WILLIAMS: That would have been—Oscar Wells is one of your uncles?

WILSON: Yes. That isn't he.

PARIS: That isn't he. He was a slight man.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's good that . . .

PARIS: Scratch that one. [chuckling]

WILSON: Now, is this Oscar? [see appendix, item 5]

PARIS: I don't think he was ever that big even.

WILLIAMS: It should say there on the back who they think it is. I think these are all kind of the same group.

PARIS: Isn't that John Wallace?

WILSON: Yes, that's John, and that's Oscar. So is this.

WILLIAMS: Could you go from left to right?

WILSON: Well, here's Daddy.

PARIS: Here?

WILLIAMS: I think that's the one that they didn't know about, with the part in the center?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Yes.

WILLIAMS: That's your father?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Can you . . . ?

PARIS: Can we verify that?

WILLIAMS: Can you go from left to right like they've done?

PARIS: Helen, I still don't think Oscar was that much different in size from Daddy, but that's all right.

WILLIAMS: It says, "Left to right, Oscar Wells, George Wallace, Helen Wallace, John Wallace."

PARIS: Yeah, that would be a Wallace, yes.

WILLIAMS: Bob Wells?

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Louise Wells.

WILSON: Right.

WILLIAMS: Frank Wallace.

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Bess Wallace.

WILSON: Right.

WILLIAMS: Unidentified man.

PARIS: That's Gates Wells.

WILSON: That's Gates Wells.

WILLIAMS: Okay, that's your father.

WILSON & PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Then there's Maud Louise Gates?

PARIS: That might be.

WILLIAMS: Fred Wallace, Frank Gates.

PARIS: Okay.

WILSON: That's probably—Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So the unidentified one is your father.

PARIS: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: And they had the rest of them right.

WILSON: Right.

PARIS: Mhm. As to our knowledge.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: But you think Oscar was smaller than—

PARIS: I don't think that was Oscar, but I . . .

WILSON: I think it is Oscar.

PARIS: Okay. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, that's good.

WILSON: Uh-huh.

PARIS: Who is that?

WILLIAMS: This is up in Platte City, you think?

PARIS: Oh, I don't know.

WILSON: Well, I didn't even pay any attention to that.

PARIS: I don't think so.

WILSON: I don't think so. That's probably . . .

WILLIAMS: With the Wallaces there, it's probably in Independence.

WILSON: I think it is. I mean, I don't think it's in Platte City. Well, this is . . .

that's George.

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: And you think that's Daddy?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: What does it say? It says, "Left to right—" [see appendix, item 6]

WILSON: "George Wallace, Gates Wells, unidentified Wells boy."

PARIS: That's Oscar, that dimple in his chin. He had a very distinct cleft.

WILSON: No, they say here that was Bobby Wells.

PARIS: Well, might have been.

WILLIAMS: And who is Bob Wells?

PARIS: He was the youngest brother—our uncle.

WILSON: That's Bob.

WILLIAMS: Your youngest uncle?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: I think that's Bob.

PARIS: Oh, that's too old for him compared to Daddy and Oscar.

WILSON: Well, that's George.

WILLIAMS: Okay, and then who's . . . ?

WILSON: And that's Daddy, I bet.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Gates Wells.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: And then they have "unidentified," and then Bobby.

PARIS: I think that's Oscar, but I have no proof.

WILLIAMS: Who are the couple in the middle?

WILSON: I don't recognize them.

WILLIAMS: It says Louise and Strother Wells. Then Helen Wallace, John Wallace, Bess Wallace.

WILSON: This is John?

PARIS: Yes. That would be Helen?

WILLIAMS: Helen, and then I think it said this is Bess.

PARIS: Yes, and who do they say this is?

WILLIAMS: Maud and Strother Wells, apparently. So this was like their family shot of your aunts and uncles, of your parents—your father and your—

PARIS: Mhm.

WILSON: Well, now, I don't identify . . . Then this must be . . . That doesn't look like either . . . That does look like Oscar.

PARIS: Wasn't he a couple years younger than Daddy?

WILSON: Oscar? Yeah, but—

PARIS: But that would be too . . . That wouldn't be Bob. That's the same man . . .

WILSON: I don't recognize him.

WILLIAMS: And this is the third one from the left, the older one?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: And the boy you think is Oscar?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: But you only had two uncles, three uncles?

PARIS: Yes, two uncles. And one of them isn't there [chuckling], at least that

we can identify.

WILLIAMS: And these Wallaces are the—Maud, or Myra's?

WILSON: Yes, those are her children, Helen and John.

WILLIAMS: Helen and John.

PARIS: Her children, Helen and John.

WILLIAMS: But it would make sense that these would be your aunts and uncles.

WILSON: Yeah, it would. But sure doesn't look . . . Uh-huh.

PARIS: Those would be her . . . that they're family, but I don't know. Because our father was the oldest of the three boys. All right, now, here.

WILLIAMS: This is 82-259. [see appendix, item 7]

PARIS: Second from right, and Louise Wells is second from the left.

WILLIAMS: I think this one they only had Bess and Louise identified. Do you recognize any of the other ladies? It's a similar one.

PARIS: I think this is . . . I've seen this before.

WILSON: Bess Wallace is second from the right.

PARIS: Margaret had this one in her book.

WILSON: Second from the right, and Louise Wells is second from the left.

PARIS: Katherine Wells, Helen.

WILLIAMS: Who is she?

WILSON: She was Daddy's . . .

PARIS: Cousin.

WILLIAMS: So she came in from the Wells—

WILSON: She was on the Wells side.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILSON: Where's the picture of her?

PARIS: That one. [see appendix, item 8]

WILSON: She was pretty, wasn't she?

WILLIAMS: So this is the generation ahead of you.

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Louise Wells, too.

WILLIAMS: And you would have known them as you were children, or young people mostly?

PARIS: Katherine Wells had died before I can remember.

WILSON: Yeah, I didn't know Katherine.

PARIS: She died, was a young woman when she died.

WILSON: Now, this was taken in the front yard of the Wells home in Platte City, and there's that fence.

PARIS: There's the fence.

WILLIAMS: That was sacrificed in World War II?

WILSON: Yeah. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: This is 82-58-57, is the photo number. Okay.

PARIS: I don't know that we were much help.

WILSON: That worries me about Bob Wells. That supposedly would be Bob Wells in that one picture, and he doesn't look like that.

PARIS: How much younger was Bob than Oscar? Do you know?

WILSON: Huh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Did you know any of the Gates boys, like Maud's brothers—G. Walter or Frank?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: So you have vague memories of your grandmother and Madge? Of course, she lived quite a bit longer.

WILSON: Oh, yeah, we saw a lot of Madge.

WILLIAMS: Can you describe her? She's kind of a mystery to us because she was so quiet, I guess.

WILSON: Well, she was *very* reserved, *very* reserved.

PARIS: Our father adored her, as I recall. He thought Aunt Madge was a wonderful person and loved being around her and was always very solicitous of her. She was a pretty lady—a pretty, older lady as I remember—and was extremely gracious, as I remember her.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Would she come up and visit you in Platte City?

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: Yes, as long as she was able, usually about once a year in the summertime when they would be home from Washington.

WILLIAMS: And do you have memories of being in Independence when she was there?

WILSON: Oh, yeah.

PARIS: Yes, yes.

WILLIAMS: Was she kind of like the kind, grandmotherly type?

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: I would say so.

WILLIAMS: Interested in children?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Tolerant?

WILSON: And what I always remember as a child was that as long as she was able, she always gave all of us younger generation Christmas presents—individual. And, you know, that's going a long way when you have your own large family.

PARIS: We were very extended at that point.

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: Yes, I'd forgotten that.

WILLIAMS: And you say that your grandmother would go to Colorado?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Where would they go?

PARIS: I don't know.

WILSON: She went usually to Estes Park, and she'd go in August and stay . . . the first part of August, and stay until the frost and then come back.

WILLIAMS: And I think Madge used to do that, too. They had some place in Colorado. Because when Mrs. Truman's father died, they went to Colorado for a year or so.

PARIS: That may be where, that may be where, why Fred and Christine liked it out there, too.

WILLIAMS: Is your family traditionally Presbyterian?

WILSON: Our family, the Wellses were. And then they used to have a Presbyterian church in Platte City years and years ago, and then I guess

it went defunct, and then they were, all belonged to the Christian church there.

WILLIAMS: Of course, growing up, Myra, Madge, and Maud were Presbyterians.

WILSON: Right.

WILLIAMS: And she was dismissed from the Independence Presbyterian church to Platte City. I wonder if she kept up being a Presbyterian, or if getting married changed that.

WILSON: I think they did, and I wouldn't know the time on that, but the Presbyterian church ceased a long time ago.

WILLIAMS: So your grandfather died in 1924, I guess this says. Wells. So neither one of you knew him personally?

WILSON: Huh-uh.

WILLIAMS: And your grandmother died in '34? Does that sound right?

WILSON: Probably. That sounds about right.

PARIS: Because I didn't know her.

WILLIAMS: I have her obituary. [reading; see appendix, item 9] "To them were born three sons and a daughter, Mrs. Louise Wells Hull," and that's the one who was real friendly with Bess?

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What do you remember about her? Can you describe her as a person?

WILSON: Louise? Well, Louise . . . we named our daughter Louise after Aunt Louise, because I can't think of any person in this entire world that was kinder or more understanding, gentle, than Louise. And she had an

extremely hard life.

PARIS: And she was very, very spiritual. She, that's, her spirituality—

WILSON: Carried her through.

PARIS: —carried her through her life. She was a wonderful, wonderful woman.

WILSON: She was quite a musician.

PARIS: Oh, yeah.

WILSON: She played the piano beautifully, and probably didn't marry until she was what, thirty or so?

PARIS: I'm not sure about that. I know her husband was some older when—

WILSON: And married Lee Hull, who was some older. He was an attorney. They lived in Kansas City for, briefly, and had two sons, and then he died early on—I think the boys were two and four. And she moved back to the family home in Platte City and then lived there with the two boys, and the home was left to her. And she really had a hard time making it financially, but she stayed at home and reared these boys, and always had a home there for the brothers too, which would come and go.

WILLIAMS: So that's why you've described her as having a hard life?

WILSON: Yeah.

PARIS: And the family home was next door to the home that we grew up in, and so we were close to her and her sons.

WILLIAMS: Well, if you were born in Kansas City, how did you end up in Platte City?

PARIS: Well, we lived in Platte City.

WILSON: Well, we just went to the hospital. I mean, that's where everybody went

to the hospital.

WILLIAMS: So you weren't living in Kansas City.

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No.

WILSON: We just went there to be born. [chuckling]

PARIS: That's sort of, that's sort of a misnomer. [chuckling] Apologize.

WILLIAMS: Were there more than two houses up there? Did you have the whole block?

PARIS: Oh, no.

WILSON: Well, we had the land behind it and . . .

PARIS: Well, I guess that's true, but they were very separate. And I don't know when Mother and Daddy got that house we grew up in.

WILSON: When they were married.

WILLIAMS: Was it intentional to live right next door to your grandparents?

WILSON: I think so.

PARIS: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: And then Louise moved into your grandparents' home?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: And that's where—

WILSON: And that was her home. I mean, that was deeded to her.

WILLIAMS: So that's why Wells Hull lives there now.

PARIS: That's right. He grew up there.

WILLIAMS: And he's the, her son.

PARIS: That's right.

WILLIAMS: James Wells Hull.

PARIS: That's right.

WILLIAMS: And he goes by Wells.

PARIS: That's right.

WILLIAMS: And the Wells Bank.

PARIS: That's right. You got it.

WILLIAMS: Makes it sound like there's money up there in Platte City.

PARIS: [chuckling] Well, I don't know.

WILSON: Well, at times.

PARIS: There have been.

WILLIAMS: If you have a bank named after you, I guess.

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: But then again, there's a Truman Bank in Grandview now, so . . . And this next one is W. Gates Wells.

WILSON: That's our father.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And you have one other sister, right?

WILSON: That's right.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: She's older?

WILSON: Right.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Could you describe Ann?

WILSON: Ann. Well, Ann is Ann Louise Wells White. And . . .

WILLIAMS: You were telling me earlier, she was more Margaret's age.

WILSON: That's right. She and Margaret were very good—

PARIS: She's the family historian, too.

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: She has a grasp on the genealogy of the family that I don't have. And she and Margaret were good friends, yes.

WILLIAMS: Were you, like Bess and Margaret I guess, outdoors a lot growing up, more playing outdoors or indoors, or tomboys, or . . . ?

PARIS: No. No.

WILLIAMS: No?

PARIS: Not I.

WILLIAMS: What did you do for recreation?

WILSON: Well, we played a lot of croquet in the summer. Is that what you . . . ?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

WILSON: And . . . I don't know what else.

WILLIAMS: The picture that we get of Margaret growing up—and even Bess—in the home in Independence is that they had a lot of things outdoors, plays and sports. And I wonder if that's a family tradition or . . .

WILSON: Well, I know that . . .

WILLIAMS: Not for you?

PARIS: Not I. [chuckling]

WILSON: Well, I think we were out a lot. What did you do in the summer?

PARIS: I played dolls.

WILSON: Dolls, okay.

PARIS: And I read a lot. I know I didn't like . . . I never liked hot weather.

WILSON: I think we were out. It seems to me we were out—

PARIS: You had Ann and Pete and Wells all to play with, too.

WILSON: We shot a lot of marbles with the two cousins. See, Louise's sons were right next door, and . . .

PARIS: And I grew up by myself. [chuckling]

WILSON: And a lot of croquet. And, by then the tennis court, which was adjoining the family home, was gone, so we didn't play tennis. Daddy's generation played a lot of tennis.

WILLIAMS: Was that a family-owned tennis court?

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Grass?

WILSON: Grass. Mhm. Rather a novelty.

WILLIAMS: And you were telling us before we started the recording that Bess Truman played up there?

WILSON: Oh yes! And she'd just beat them all.

PARIS: She whipped the boys.

WILSON: As a matter of fact, getting ready . . . in this move, one of the things that I cherish are the tennis rackets that Daddy had, and I was telling those men that were moving to be sure and save those. And he always said that Bess always beat all the boys. And you think of her playing and beating the boys wearing pantaloons and all that gear. [chuckling] She was very athletic. Now, Margaret was not athletic.

PARIS: No, she was more like her father in that respect, I suppose.

WILLIAMS: How did they get so involved in tennis to have their own court and

everything?

WILSON: Well, I don't know. I don't know how that came about.

WILLIAMS: Was it just a fad, or just a family interest? Do you know?

WILSON: I guess you'd have to say it was a family interest, because it was rather unique in a town the size of Platte City to have a court. And I don't know how that started, but they all played.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember them playing?

WILSON: No, huh-uh.

WILLIAMS: By that time, they'd quit?

WILSON: Yeah, by that time. And then soon after any memory, why, I think Aunt Louise sold that part.

PARIS: Yes, I think you're right.

WILSON: For a couple of homes down there. She needed the cash.

WILLIAMS: And next in line was Oscar Wells?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Your uncle.

WILSON: Oscar.

WILLIAMS: And he has . . . ?

PARIS: He had one son, who is deceased.

WILLIAMS: And that was?

PARIS: Bill, William.

WILSON: William Elliott.

PARIS: Boy, you came up with that.

WILSON: Once in a while. And Bill was your age, wasn't he?

PARIS: Bill was two years younger than I.

WILLIAMS: What was Uncle Oscar like?

WILSON: Well, Oscar probably had the brightest mind of any of that generation. He was an extremely bright man. And, unfortunately, he was an alcoholic and caused a lot of grief.

WILLIAMS: What did he do for a living?

WILSON: Well, just first one thing and then another.

PARIS: He was, I think, by training, I suppose, a bookkeeper, accountant.

WILSON: An accountant.

PARIS: But he was unable to hold jobs. But he, he was a prodigious reader. He could read not one book a night, but he could read two books—and did, when he was able.

WILLIAMS: What was his wife's name?

WILSON: Elsie.

PARIS: And they were divorced, and she is now deceased. They were divorced a long time ago when that was uncommon.

WILLIAMS: Not done?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: How long did Bill live, her son?

PARIS: Bill died about four years ago.

WILLIAMS: Was he in Platte City all the years?

PARIS: Yes. Well, yeah, in the area.

WILSON: Well, he was right in the area. I think he lived in Platte Woods, didn't he?

PARIS: Yes, that's right. That's not accurate. In Platte County, I would say.

WILSON: And he has two daughters.

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: But I don't know their names.

WILLIAMS: So he was married?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: But he was divorced, too.

PARIS: And one of his daughters is in the Kansas City area, and I don't know where the other one is.

WILLIAMS: Do you know their names?

PARIS: Shelly is one.

WILSON: Oh, well, good for you.

PARIS: No, Susie was his wife. I can't remember the other one. Wells and Sue Hull would know, have kept in contact with them.

WILLIAMS: So Bill was your cousin?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And you had contact with him?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Yes. Because they . . . Oscar and Elsie and with their son Bill would live periodically with Aunt Louise.

PARIS: And then after they were divorced, when Bill was a little boy, he would spend time with Oscar at Aunt Louise's. So then he and I would play.

WILLIAMS: So Oscar, I guess you mentioned this earlier, she always had a house available for them.

PARIS: That's right.

WILSON: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And the last child was William Strother Wells, Jr.?

WILSON: That's right.

WILLIAMS: Before I ask you about his wives, [chuckling] we'll change tapes. I just noticed here that there were three of them.

WILSON: Yes!

[End #4372; Begin #4373]

WILSON: One thing I was going to, we were talking about last night was when they used to come to visit. And Aunt Madge was . . . she didn't believe in drinking, at all. And Harry liked a little bourbon; so did our dad.

PARIS: And Aunt Louise didn't approve of it.

WILSON: And Aunt Louise didn't approve, and so when they'd come up to our house, they'd sit on the back steps there, and Daddy—I mean, they always came for lunch, they had a big meal at noon, they'd come . . . and they'd sit on the back steps and have a little snort.

PARIS: Bourbon and branch water. Well, there was quite a little bit of alcoholism, in every family. Well, it was hidden for a long time. Every family has it, I suppose. And they were profoundly . . . the women who had been affected felt very strongly, which was certainly understandable.

WILLIAMS: Can you repeat what you just said about sitting on the back porch.

WILSON: Oh, sure.

WILLIAMS: Because this wasn't on.

WILSON: When the families—the Wells family and the Wallace–Truman families—would visit back and forth, the times that they’d come to our house in Platte City, my dad—who liked to have a little bourbon every now and then, and so did Harry—and they would sit on the back steps and have a bourbon and branch water before lunch, so that the rest of the people couldn’t see them, I guess.

PARIS: I think they weren’t offered.

WILLIAMS: Because somebody disapproved of it?

PARIS: Aunt Madge and Aunt Louise.

WILSON: Right, Aunt Madge and our Aunt Louise. So they just had to kind of sneak around.

WILLIAMS: So that was another strike against Harry Truman maybe.

PARIS: [chuckling] Oh, I don’t think so. Oh, yes, well, that may have been true.

WILSON: In Madge’s eyes.

PARIS: In Madge’s eyes, yeah.

WILLIAMS: What’s your earliest memory of your Aunt Bess?

PARIS: Cousin Bess.

WILSON: You mean Cousin Bess.

WILLIAMS: Cousin Bess, I’m sorry.

WILSON: Oh, I don’t know.

WILLIAMS: She was, of course, Truman by then. Was that while she was a senator’s wife?

WILSON: Oh, no, I would think it would be when they were still living there.

PARIS: Probably your memory would be earlier than that. I think probably that

would be my memories of when he was running for or elected to.

WILLIAMS: He became senator in '34.

PARIS: Well, for heaven's sakes, yes. [chuckling]

WILSON: You weren't born.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: How much did you visit before he became president? How much would you see the Independence relatives?

WILSON: Well, two or three times a year.

PARIS: Well, I remember they always got together in the summer—that was one time—and maybe twice—

WILSON: During the holidays.

PARIS: —one time in Independence and one time in Platte City. And I don't really remember too much about the holidays, whether it was during that time or not.

WILLIAMS: Was there any regular thing, like Fourth of July was always at Platte City?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No, but they corresponded; maybe not real frequently, but they did keep in touch.

WILLIAMS: Was it common to telephone back then?

PARIS: No, only in case of emergency.

WILSON: Well, you only telephoned in case of emergency. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And what was your reaction then when you suddenly had a cousin who was President of the United States?

WILSON: Oh, it was just terribly exciting. And one thing I remember—not in exact sequence, but when Harry ran then in '48—and I was living in the sorority house here in Columbia, and it seemed like the entire membership were Republicans. So we went to bed thinking that Dewey had won and never even gave it a second thought, and came down to breakfast and several of my friends would not speak. It was just like I had been able to vote then and couldn't. I mean, it was such a shock.

WILLIAMS: So people were aware that you were related?

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: And the reason we, in fact, went—made the Washington pilgrimage in 1947 was because Cousin Bess told our father that we needed to come that year because no telling what would happen in 1948, or after that. So they were, that seemed to be the appropriate time, and certainly in '48 they would have been campaigning.

WILSON: And we have the letters when they were trying to set up a time—Bess and our dad—to come, and that's when she did mention that. And so then, when they did decide it would be in June of 1947, Bess suggested that we time it so that we could go up to Princeton because of Daddy's, being his alma mater, and be there for the, when Harry was awarded the honorary degree. And certainly that was a treat.

PARIS: We stayed five days, and that, according to her, was not nearly long enough; but our father said that five days for a family of five anywhere was certainly long enough, and certainly including the White House. So we didn't get to do all that she thought we should, but we, it was, they

were very activity-filled days.

WILLIAMS: And you stayed in the White House?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Could you tell the story about going into Washington?

WILSON: Oh, okay. We, our family went to Princeton for Daddy's reunion first, and then we went on to New York to spend a few days. And then Bess had said they, she and her driver Hardy would meet us on our way from New York to Washington, and she had the license number. So we kept getting closer and closer to Washington, and no sign of Bess and Hardy. And, finally, we're in Washington and found the way to the White House gate. By then my dad was very nervous because he hadn't seen hide nor hair of anybody he knew. So the guard came up, and he said, rather nervously, "Do you recognize me?" Or, "Do you know me?" I guess is what he said. And the guard said, "Well, who are you?" And he told him. "Oh," he said, "Mrs. Truman and Hardy have been looking all over for you." In fact, they had been on a different road than we were—or we were on a different road from them. So then the gate was opened and we went in.

And a funny thing, we had . . . Mother had told us to wear our old clothes on the trip before we got to the White House—all the old underwear and what have you. [telephone rings; interview interrupted]

PARIS: We can let it go.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

WILSON: Well, no, I can't.

PARIS: All right, why don't you go?

WILSON: So you go ahead and tell about the lingerie.

WILLIAMS: You were wearing your old underwear, apparently.

PARIS: I don't believe I can finish that story. That's a unique story.
[conversation regarding telephone call not transcribed] Another story
about the, when we got ready to leave, Helen. The car, bringing the car
around.

WILSON: Did you tell about the underwear?

PARIS: No, you'll have to finish that story.

WILSON: [chuckling] Sorry. So, we had a D.C. bag with all the old underwear,
and we were going to leave it in the car. And then we had all very nice
things for our stay in the White House. So when we got up to our room
that night after dinner, lo and behold, the maids had gotten all,
everything out of the car and had washed and ironed all of this old
underwear, and my mother was horrified because she thought, oh! they
would say, "Oh, the Trumans' poor relatives had arrived." [chuckling]

PARIS: They had all the laundry done every day. And one evening they
suggested that . . . I had on white shoes and they needed polishing, and
they said, "Well, you could set it outside the door." And that was really
something then, the next morning when your shoes were all done.

The car, at the end when we got ready to leave, and they brought
the car around from having been parked in the garage, and it was
beautifully washed and shined and ready for us to go. And we got in the
car, waved, and said goodbye, and kissed everyone, and what a

wonderful time we'd had—and the car wouldn't go. So the guards came around and pushed, and pushed us all the way around the circle driveway, and then we came back around in front of the front door while Cousin Harry, Cousin Bess, and Margaret were all waving. We all waved again. They pushed us *again* around. We went around three times, and finally the car kicked in and we finally made a dramatic departure.

WILLIAMS: What kinds of things would you do?

WILSON: Oh!

PARIS: Oh, we bowled. They had a bowling alley.

WILSON: I didn't bowl.

PARIS: And Margaret had a dance for you and Ann—

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: —with the Marine . . . Wasn't it the Marine band that played?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: And you got left out?

PARIS: I was too young.

WILSON: We played charades, and she had some young people there. And then one night—

PARIS: Went to the movies. They went to the movie at the White House.

WILSON: Yes, and, of course, Margaret's favorite actor was Nelson Eddy, and so we saw some of his movies.

WILLIAMS: She was in college at this time, at that age?

PARIS: Yes. Or was she just out?

WILSON: She was just out. Oh, and then we, Ann—

WILLIAMS: Right. She was twenty-three.

WILSON: She in the evening she played the piano and we all sang. And then one evening, one of her male friends had a party—he was a lawyer there—and Ann and I got to go to that party.

PARIS: They had a different social life than I did while we were there. [chuckling] Because I went up in the bowling alley and swam.

WILSON: Yeah, that's right.

PARIS: And then, one evening, we went to the attic and looked at all the catalogued gifts that had come in from heads of states—and *beautiful* things. And they couldn't use them of course. Or, I mean, could use them, but they had to be carefully taken care of.

WILLIAMS: So did Margaret sort of take charge of you?

WILSON: The two of us.

WILLIAMS: And Mrs. Truman took charge of your parents?

WILSON: Yeah, and Bess.

WILLIAMS: How much did you see the president?

WILSON: Oh, we saw him for breakfast every morning, and dinner at night, and I don't remember about lunch. Oh, lunch, we went to a ladies' lunch one day that Margaret had at a hotel. Then one day we went up to Mount Vernon, and Ann and I got . . . Margaret, of course, loved to drive, and they had a convertible at her disposal.

PARIS: Well, on the Sunday we went on the yacht, the Sunday we were there, the presidential yacht, which was *quite* an experience for those of us

who had never been on the water much, certainly not on a yacht. That was fun. Had a lovely meal.

WILLIAMS: Did you go up and down the river?

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: Mhm. The president was piped on and he was piped off, and we'd never seen that before.

WILSON: Now, one thing, going back to the train ride up to Princeton, one funny thing was Mrs. Vins—Well, the ladies kind of met and stayed in one of the cars, and the men all got in a car to visit. And so when we were all sitting around, why—I've forgotten who it was noticed—Margaret did—Mrs. Vinson and Margaret, as it turned out, had on the very same dresses. And they, oh, they were just, you know, shocked. And Mrs. Vinson was very matronly, and Margaret wasn't, but they decided they must have good taste. And Mamie Eisenhower then got . . . Naturally, the women got to talking about clothes, and Mamie Eisenhower said, "Well," she said, "guess how much my dress cost." And it was \$19.95, or something like that. She was a perky little lady.

PARIS: At Garfinkels, or whatever the big department store was there.

WILSON: But that was a big joke that they should both appear with the same kind . . . exact same dress.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Truman devote all her of time to you, or did she have other duties?

WILSON: Yes! When we were visiting?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

WILSON: Every, I mean, yes, she did. There was something planned for us by her and Margaret all the time.

PARIS: They were . . . busily, busy days, and they had planned them very carefully.

WILLIAMS: Did you sightsee?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: All the monuments?

PARIS: Yes, and being with the president's family, we went in the side doors, and no one was there, and we got the royal treatment. We also went to the Senate that day.

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: And Daddy was very interested in a bill that they were debating—it was some kind of a farm bill. And we were in the president's box, and he was on the front row. And he leaned over on the railing, and the guard had to come say that . . . please get his arms off, because at that point they were not very safe. Shortly after that is when they began renovation of the Senate Building, and they were getting ready to renovate the White House, also. It was another reason we went in '47, because not only did they not know what was going to happen in '48, but they also hoped that they would be renovating the White House, which they did.

WILLIAMS: Did you go back for the inauguration?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: Did all of the Wells families eventually get to Washington to visit?

PARIS: Aunt Louise didn't.

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No, I think we were probably the only ones.

WILSON: I think that's probably right.

WILLIAMS: Was that, any particular reason?

WILSON: Well, financial would be one, for Aunt Louise anyway. And she, you know, I mean, she would—

WILLIAMS: So you had to find a way to get out there, but once you were there, you were taken care of.

PARIS: Oh, absolutely.

WILSON: Oh yes, right. Now, Ann and I slept in the Lincoln bed, and Bess was in the . . . They put a little daybed or something in the—

PARIS: It was the maid's room, and it was furnished.

WILSON: The maid's room, off . . . Or was it?

PARIS: Yeah, it was very furnished, but I was very insulted because I had to stay in the maid's room. [chuckling]

WILSON: And Mother and Daddy were in the Queen—

PARIS: Queen Elizabeth's room. And then when they—

WILSON: It was done in rose.

PARIS: With a canopy bed.

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: And when they redid the White House, they eliminated those little side rooms, so I don't think they're there anymore.

WILSON: The maid's room?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: I know what it's like being the youngest. [laughter] You always get short-changed.

PARIS: They keep telling us we get all the advantages and we were very spoiled, but you wonder about it when you hear stories like that.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Well, we always took our family trips, and I was too young really to . . . Anyway, that's . . . How much did you see the Trumans during those years when they were in Independence?

PARIS: Afterward?

WILLIAMS: While he was president.

PARIS: Oh, while he was president.

WILLIAMS: Did you see them at Christmastime or in the summertime?

PARIS: Usually the summertime.

WILSON: I remember vividly the first time they were coming up to eat lunch with us after he was president. And Mother looked out the front door and she said . . . And, you know, in Platte City everybody knows everybody. And so she looked out the front door, and she said, "My, who is that over there across the street that's had a flat tire?" And she didn't recognize him. And he worked on the tire for a long time. Well, as it turned out, it was the Secret Service. Oh, this was terribly exciting when we recognized, realized that's who it was.

WILLIAMS: Did he really have a flat tire?

WILSON: No, he was just, you know, checking out—

PARIS: Posing. And then Ann had a . . . When she was here at the university one summer, she had some of her friends for a house party in Platte City, and the rest of the family moved out. And Margaret was invited, and came. And I remember the Secret Service circling the house all night, and it was very exciting to know that those—

WILSON: Yes.

PARIS: —young men were outside circling around, protecting them all evening long.

WILSON: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: So when they would come up to Platte City when he was president, would there be a big motorcade like you see now?

WILSON: Oh no. I mean, I don't remember that.

PARIS: No, there were probably three cars. Very unobtrusive.

WILLIAMS: They didn't shut down the whole town?

PARIS: No.

WILSON: No. I think they felt they were pretty safe in Platte City.

PARIS: And they didn't do a big security check on everybody, and the neighbors, and so on.

WILLIAMS: They didn't have dogs sniffing?

WILSON: No, I don't remember that.

PARIS: Things have really progressed since then.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you would exchange greetings at Christmas, gifts and things.

WILSON: Oh, yes, and letters, uh-huh.

PARIS: Cousin Bess and I exchanged Christmas presents all of our life. And I

was telling the girls last night—and I could not remember the name of the book, but we finally came up . . . I remember the first time when E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* came out, and she sent that to me, and I was terribly excited because I loved the book. And then she loved mysteries, and so in late years it was a little difficult to find something, but I would try to always find the newest mystery, which she probably already had at that point, but I would try to send that to her. And I’m sorry now that I don’t have a lot more ideas and remembrances of what she actually had sent.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever sign any of the books, by chance? Like “To Cousin Bess,” or . . . ?

PARIS: I think maybe I did, but I don’t know. I wonder if I . . . I don’t know.

WILLIAMS: How would you have signed your name?

PARIS: “Bess.” “With love, Bess.”

WILLIAMS: I think we do have a “To Bess, from Bess” thing—

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: —which puzzled us for a while.

WILSON: Well, that’s you.

PARIS: That would be it then.

WILSON: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: I forget what it is, but part of my jobs in the past have been researching gifts.

WILSON: Oh, well, that has to be it.

WILLIAMS: There have been things from Helen. And since a family custom, I guess,

is to repeat names, sometimes we're not sure.

WILSON: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Could you explain the process of naming in your family? I think you said there was something of a system.

WILSON: Oh, in our—the firstborn son was always named William and the mother's maiden name. Like, our father is William Gates Wells, his mother's maiden name. And then his father was William Strother, which was his grandmother's maiden name.

WILLIAMS: Have you repeated? Did you keep going?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: We kind of got off that somewhere. We probably would have had a lot of the same names. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: But there are several people with Louise as a name.

WILSON: Yes, and Helens and . . .

WILLIAMS: Elizabeths.

WILSON: And we use Wells a lot. And one of our husbands said we were going to wake up and make a mistake someday and name somebody Wells Wells. [chuckling] He liked that.

WILLIAMS: Well, how much did you see of the Trumans after they retired?

PARIS: Well, I think they—as I recall, they visited on the telephone by that time a little bit and would call back and forth. And probably about the same time. It might be a little bit different times of the year. When I was here at the university, we had asked Cousin Harry to come down to be a guest speaker, and my mother and father picked them up and brought

them down. And the Trumans stayed with the Ellises, and President Ellis was the president of the university at the time. And then they went over, and then Mother and Daddy went over to the Ellises for breakfast the next morning, were invited, and they took them back.

WILSON: Well, that was because of you, Bess. I mean, you were president of—

PARIS: Well, I mean, we were able to get him to come because we had a contact.

WILLIAMS: You told me a story earlier about Margaret visiting the Pi Phi?

WILSON: Yes. Now, this was when Ann, our older sister, was a Kappa at the University of Missouri, and Margaret came to spend the weekend with Ann. And Margaret is a George Washington University Pi Phi. So, while she was visiting the weekend with Ann, she said, “Ann, I’m going to run across the street and see the Pi Phi house at the university while I’m here,” and so she just went on over there. And there was a pledge on duty at the door of the Pi Phi house, and so the little pledge says, “May I help you?” And Margaret says, “Hello, I’m Margaret Truman, and I’m a Pi Phi from George Washington, and I just wanted to look over your house.” And the little pledge piped up, and she said, “Well, I’m Eleanor Roosevelt. Come on in.” [chuckling] So, we decided that probably the powers that be thought long and hard how to get over that little pledge’s mistake.

WILLIAMS: Were there times that the Trumans’ visits to Platte City stopped?

WILSON: No. You mean regularly? Well, only when Bess became infirm.

WILLIAMS: As long as he was alive, would they go up?

WILSON: Until he got, you know, not able to get around.

WILLIAMS: Was that a year, two years, three years, before he died?

WILSON: Oh, I wouldn't . . . I don't know.

PARIS: I was sitting here thinking. Somebody's, the last person—The last time I remember he was up there would have been somebody's funeral, and I don't know who it would have been. Would it have been Dad's?

WILSON: It might have been. I know they both came to our weddings, I know that.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Where were they?

PARIS: In Platte City.

WILSON: Our wedding. They came to your wedding, too.

PARIS: Our wedding, yes, which was . . . Both our weddings were in Platte City.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: When did you leave Platte City?

PARIS: I was married in 1957 and moved to south Missouri then.

WILSON: And I in '54, and they were there at both of those weddings.

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: And then . . . Well, now, Cousin Bess and Cousin Helen came to Aunt Louise's funeral. They had a driver bring them up.

WILLIAMS: Which was recently?

WILSON: Oh, no.

WILLIAMS: Seventies or eighties?

WILSON: Mhm.

WILSON: When do you think Aunt Louise died?

PARIS: Oh, I have no frame of reference. Our father died in about '64. Let's see, Ann Frances was born in '59, and five—'64. And Aunt Louise probably died in '68 or '70.

WILLIAMS: So Mr. Truman was still alive?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you have personal contact with them? Well, you said you sent gifts and wrote.

PARIS: No, we would write . . . I mean, I might write her a note infrequently. I remember when my daughter was about probably thirteen or fourteen . . . Well, no, another time, I took my family up to Platte City, my children and my husband—not to Platte City but to Independence—to call on Cousin Bess, and she was pretty much of an invalid. She was up, but she couldn't hear very well and she didn't get around very well. But I wanted my children to meet her. And then one other time I remember—And I don't remember when that was. I don't have any recollection of what time. And then one other time was when Ann and Helen and my daughter and I stopped by to see her. And those were the last two times I probably remember seeing her.

WILLIAMS: Did she change at all through the years?

PARIS: I think not. I don't think so at all. She was a unique lady who had a real . . . I think she had a real understanding of who she was, and I think that's kind of a gift, and I think that's the reason she got along very

well. Ask Helen that question, because I think she might have a . . .

WILLIAMS: You keep referring to “Cousin Bess” and “Cousin Harry.” Was that what you called them?

PARIS: We all, in our day, you never called anyone by their first name. And you either called them Mr. or Mrs. or by something prefaced, either—and we’d call a lot of people by “Miss Mary,” if that was appropriate. And we called a lot of people “Aunt” and “Uncle” who were not aunt and uncle, but this kept you from being too familiar by calling them by their first name, but less formal than Mr. and Mrs. And so, yes, we always called Aunt Louise, Cousin Bess, Cousin Harry.

WILLIAMS: Margaret was . . . ?

PARIS: Margaret was Margaret.

WILLIAMS: Because she was your generation.

PARIS: She was our generation, yes.

WILLIAMS: When he was president, did you change that at all?

PARIS: No. Perhaps we should have, but we didn’t. I think I remember my father once or twice calling him Mr. President, but not very often. They kept on pretty much, Harry and Bess.

WILLIAMS: So, to your parents, it was just first-name basis?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: To you, it was Cousin . . .

PARIS: Yes, and we called Cousin Helen Wallace and Cousin May and Frank and George cousins.

WILLIAMS: You might want to look through these photographs of the home.

PARIS: Ask Helen that question about Cousin Bess.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Do you think either one of the Trumans changed much through the years, as people?

WILSON: I wouldn't, I couldn't see any change.

PARIS: I said to Jim that I thought Cousin Bess had a real understanding of who she was, and that—

WILSON: And remained that way.

PARIS: And remained that way.

WILSON: Oh, absolutely. Yes, you said that very well.

PARIS: And she was loyal. Our family, our families—and I don't know where this came from, whether it was from that side of the family perhaps or whether it was a sign of the times—but they were very loyal people, and they were loyal to your family, and you were loyal to your friends. And I think our father, particularly, and Aunt Louise and Cousin Bess, you know, they were very loyal.

WILSON: They were the epitome of loyalty.

PARIS: Yes, and they were always . . . If they could ever be of help to one another, they would be the first to be there.

WILLIAMS: Did that include not talking about family to outsiders.

WILSON: Oh, my, yes. Oh, yes.

PARIS: Oh, no, I mean, barely in whispers, if it was necessary among the family, but . . . And that was whispered, if there was anything.

WILLIAMS: Were you hounded by the press at all?

WILSON: No.

PARIS: No. This is our first opportunity. [chuckling]

WILSON: Yeah! We're making the most of it! [chuckling]

PARIS: I wonder how we're going to read, Helen.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe Harry, as a—

WILSON: Delightful!

PARIS: He was. He was a fun person.

WILSON: He was. He had a really good sense of humor.

PARIS: And there again, he kind of knew what was important and what . . . And I think probably, historically, he knew what was important and what he could do about it. And those other things, he had to let go.

WILSON: And honest. I never knew anybody so honest and open, which was kind of ahead of his time, too, on being so open. Well, I mean for . . .

WILLIAMS: Is that from personal experience, his honesty? Or just as president? As a politician or as a person, you mean?

PARIS: Well, no.

WILSON: No, a person. And I think, judging from a lot of other politicians, he's probably the most honest of politicians. [chuckling] No, I think he was just basically an honest person.

WILLIAMS: You said he had a good sense of humor. Do you remember anything in particular that was significant?

PARIS: No, but he had a wonderful laugh.

WILSON: Yeah, he did.

PARIS: He'd throw that head back and laugh, easily.

WILLIAMS: Well, Mrs. Truman is pictured as kind of sour.

PARIS: That's too bad, too, and I think it's because she hated to have her photograph taken, actually.

WILSON: Yeah, because whenever there was a camera around, she kind of just pruned up.

PARIS: There again, she had a very hearty laugh and used it easily.

WILSON: Uh-huh. Yeah!

PARIS: But, there again, she was around people that she enjoyed being around, where we were.

WILSON: When we saw her.

PARIS: When we saw her, right. And that may have had some difference, because she allowed for not . . . people who were not . . . who were false, she didn't have much allowance for that.

WILLIAMS: Which did Margaret take after most, do you think?

PARIS: I think she's a combination of both of them.

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: Her serious side, probably from . . . well, I don't know, from Cousin Bess maybe, but she adored her dad.

WILSON: They bantered back and forth a lot.

WILLIAMS: Here's that picture. This is the way the house looked when we took over. The attic, for instance. You said you played up there.

WILSON: Yeah, but I don't, I can't . . .

PARIS: I don't think I was ever in the attic.

WILSON: I remember we just went up there, you know, and tried on clothes and . .

PARIS: Oh, Scott, what a job you've had. What'd you do with all those baskets?

[chuckling]

WILSON: And the broom.

WILLIAMS: Scott has an expertise, recently developed, with neckties.

SCOTT STONE: Neckties.

PARIS: Were there a lot of neckties? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Another museum aide specialized in baskets and luggage, which were all kind of piled there together.

PARIS: This is kind of like Aunt Louise's attic, and we used to spend hours up there. Aunt Louise's attic has a turret. Isn't that what you call it?

WILSON: I think so.

WILLIAMS: This is a ladder that goes up on the very top of the roof. Don't suppose you were ever out there looking down on Independence from three stories up? You said you tried on clothes. Were there old clothes and stuff up there?

WILSON: Yeah. And hats.

WILLIAMS: Was it old-time stuff?

WILSON: Yes. There were some hats.

PARIS: There are the hat boxes.

WILLIAMS: This is on the second floor.

WILSON: I don't remember the second, I remember the bedroom . . .

PARIS: Downstairs.

WILSON: Downstairs, with the bath.

PARIS: With the bath. That was sort of ahead of its time.

WILSON: Uh-huh, it was.

PARIS: A big bath. In my child's eye, I recall it being a big bath.

[End #4373; Begin #4374]

WILSON: You'd rather go back now, wouldn't you? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Right. Okay, more of the attic.

PARIS: [chuckling] I love it. Is that a little stained-glass window?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

PARIS: The old crib.

WILLIAMS: Now, this is the basement.

PARIS: This is the basement.

WILSON: I was never in the basement, I don't think.

PARIS: There's Vietta's ironing board.

WILLIAMS: Did you know Vietta?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: What was she like?

PARIS: Oh, a delight. She—

WILLIAMS: She was with the Trumans a long time.

PARIS: And went to Washington with them and then came back with them. She may have retired during that time, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Margaret seemed to really like her.

PARIS: Yes. I think she kind of reared Margaret.

WILLIAMS: Was that because Vietta . . . That's what I was getting at. This is the study.

WILSON: And there's the library.

PARIS: The library. I remember that.

WILSON: That's where they spent all their time.

PARIS: Yes, in the last . . . late years. Now, is that just like it always was?

WILLIAMS: Well, it's changed somewhat, but since they retired it's been this way.

WILSON & PARIS: Mhm, mhm.

WILLIAMS: They built the shelves up there.\

WILSON & PARIS: Mhm, mhm.

PARIS: Are those are the little grandchildren, I guess?

WILLIAMS: Now, this is one of the upstairs bedrooms.

WILSON: I don't remember that.

PARIS: I don't remember the upstairs.

WILLIAMS: You said you stayed in the house?

WILSON: Yeah, but I don't . . . Jim, I don't remember which bedroom.

WILLIAMS: Was that growing up?

WILSON: Yeah. No, I never stayed in later years.

PARIS: And there's the dining room.

WILLIAMS: Would they stay overnight in Platte City?

WILSON: Well, I don't really know about that.

PARIS: I don't ever remember. They would stay with Aunt Louise, because we didn't have the room—if they did.

WILLIAMS: How long did it take to drive there, an hour?

PARIS: Oh, an hour.

WILLIAMS: So it wasn't like once you got there you stayed?

PARIS: No!

WILSON: No! Usually they'd come for lunch, and visit in the afternoon, and then go back.

WILLIAMS: This is the dining room.

PARIS: Mhm. Hmm.

WILLIAMS: These aren't in any kind of order, I think.

WILSON: Here's the—

WILLIAMS: —dining room.

PARIS: It looks nice.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear about this big silver piece? Madge's wedding gift, 1883.

PARIS: Oh. [whispering] How lovely.

WILSON: Oh! No, I never heard . . .

WILLIAMS: This is the foyer, when you walked in.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: You said you would come in the back door usually?

WILSON: Yeah. We came in . . .

PARIS: . . . through the kitchen.

WILSON: Here's the back—

PARIS: Oh, that's the back hall.

WILLIAMS: Where the coat . . .

WILSON: Yeah, or through the kitchen, but usually through there.

WILLIAMS: Did you pull around in the back?

PARIS: Parked in the back, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have to go through the Secret Service?

WILSON: Yes, they'd come out. Usually, though, if we'd call Bess beforehand, she would, you know, tell them.

PARIS: Well, at that stage, I don't think anybody ever was presumptuous enough to go unannounced. They made some kind of an appointment to visit.

WILLIAMS: This is the living room.

PARIS: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Is that basically as you remember it?

WILSON: Well, I thought there was a loveseat.

PARIS: A Victorian loveseat.

WILLIAMS: There's one over in this room. We'll probably get—

WILSON: In the music room?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

WILSON: Maybe that's where . . .

WILLIAMS: It may have been shifted around through the years.

WILSON: Yeah. It seems to me there was a loveseat right there.

PARIS: What's this room? There was a loveseat right there.

WILLIAMS: Under where Margaret's portrait is in the living room.

PARIS: They may have changed some things since we've . . .

WILLIAMS: Oh, I'm sure they did.

PARIS: Well, of course they have, but I mean in the recent . . .

WILSON: This is the downstairs bathroom?

WILLIAMS: Right. Is this the one you remember as being big?

WILSON: Yeah.

PARIS: I don't remember. I thought I remembered it, but I don't remember it at all.

WILSON: I remember being very impressed with having a first-floor bathroom.

PARIS: Off the bedroom.

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did Madge stay in that bedroom?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Yes, and then Bess did until she died.

PARIS: And I can remember, when she'd be ill, our father going down and going in.

WILSON: I don't remember this.

WILLIAMS: This is the room above the kitchen, which we call the storage room.

WILSON: Nope.

WILLIAMS: Never up there?

WILSON: Never up there.

PARIS: Huh.

WILLIAMS: And this is one of the upstairs bedrooms.

WILSON: I don't remember this either.

PARIS: Christine, I bet you, is going to be able to help you on a lot of these things.

WILSON: Yeah, she's going to . . .

WILLIAMS: This is the upstairs bathroom.

WILSON: I don't remember that either.

WILLIAMS: This is the storage room. This is at the top of the stairs, Mrs. Truman's

desk.

PARIS: I don't remember that being up there either. Of course, it may not have . . . probably just—

WILSON: I remember the big desk in the study, Cousin Harry's.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. This is the kitchen.

PARIS: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Was Vietta a cook for them while you were there?

PARIS: Yes.

WILSON: Oh, yeah.

PARIS: She would fix dinner while . . .

WILSON: Here's the piano.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever happen to be around when there were dignitaries visiting?

WILSON: In Independence?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

WILSON: No. I don't remember that.

PARIS: There was one time, and I don't remember who it was. I may have been with Mother and Daddy; you may not have been there. But I hadn't even thought about it.

WILSON: Now, it seemed to me there used to be a hall tree.

WILLIAMS: There's a coat rack around in the corner here. You see Mrs. Truman's coat hanging there.

WILSON: A coat rack, yeah.

WILLIAMS: But there was a free-standing tree?

WILSON: Seemed to me.

WILLIAMS: Here's the—

PARIS: Music room. There is the Victorian type . . .

WILLIAMS: It's kind of silk fabric.

PARIS: The music room was across the hall.

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: As you come in the front, on the left.

WILSON: It was on the left.

PARIS: And the little study was behind that, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: Right, that's the doorway here. Now, do you remember the Churchill painting or the Grandma Moses? Margaret has those now, but they were in this room.

WILSON: I guess . . .

WILLIAMS: When you would go in . . . I guess you've been in the house, so there was no need for a tour or anything.

WILSON: No.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Truman wouldn't point things out.

PARIS: No. [chuckling]

WILSON: Oh, no. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: This is up in the central hall. Now, there's another old sofa there.

PARIS: Is this the pantry?

WILLIAMS: Mhm. Between the kitchen—

PARIS: The kitchen and . . .

WILSON: Yes, I remember that covered up the radiator. Isn't that right?

WILLIAMS: We call it the plate warmer.

WILSON: Oh, the plate warmer.

WILLIAMS: There's a door you open.

WILSON: Oh, yes.

PARIS: Was that in the dining room?

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: I don't remember that. Do you remember that?

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: Kind of unique, isn't it?

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And this is in the dining room.

PARIS: Look at that. [chuckling] Isn't this amazing?

WILLIAMS: This is upstairs in the hallway.

WILSON: Upstairs? In the hallway.

WILLIAMS: In the central hall. The desk and this were made out of wood from the White House when it was renovated.

WILSON: Oh, no, I don't remember ever seeing that.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Truman used this.

PARIS: We probably weren't ever up there after that.

WILLIAMS: Some of this is probably family.

WILSON: Yeah. Yes, I remember the light in the newel post, or by the newel post.

PARIS: And the front door. Is that the front door?

WILSON: I think that's pretty.

WILLIAMS: It's just probably a doorway into one of the . . . either the living room or the . . .

PARIS: Pretty.

WILLIAMS: This is a view of the study from . . . looking into the music room.

WILSON: Yes, and I remember the desk.

PARIS: The grandfather's clock.

WILLIAMS: Supposedly a Gates family heirloom from Vermont. That's the tradition, at least. This is in the living room.

PARIS: Who is that?

WILLIAMS: The second . . .

PARIS: Grandson.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

PARIS: That's . . .

WILLIAMS: Tom?

PARIS: Yes, I believe so. Thomas.

WILLIAMS: Clifton, William, Thomas. I get them—

PARIS: Clifton Truman. Isn't it Clifton Truman, and then William Wallace, and Thomas . . .

WILLIAMS: Washington? Or Thomas Gates. There's one that has a Gates.

PARIS: Thomas Gates, and then is it . . . and something Washington. The last one was a Washington.

WILLIAMS: There again, it's those family names; they get all mixed up—Gates, Wallace, Truman.

PARIS: And we have children . . . my generation, her oldest is the age of Helen's oldest, I think, and they've kind of followed our children around. Isn't that a cute picture of that little boy?

WILSON: Mhm.

PARIS: Look at the coat just hanging, and his hat. I remember that.

WILSON: Mhm. Yes, in the corner . . .

PARIS: They hung that spool. [?]

WILLIAMS: The curios.

WILSON: Yeah, the curios.

WILLIAMS: All the portraits were done when they were in the White House, of course. Do you remember anything of what was there before that?

WILSON: No, I don't, Jim.

WILLIAMS: That's a—

WILSON: Piece made from when they renovated the White House?

PARIS: That was neat. That was very thoughtful.

WILLIAMS: Do you recall what the yard or the house looked like?

WILSON: Well, let's see. I was thinking . . . Of course, the one big event we went to was Margaret's wedding, which . . .

PARIS: Oh, yes!

WILSON: I mean, the reception.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: It was on the lawn, or inside and outside?

WILSON: It was inside.

PARIS: It was inside.

WILLIAMS: Was the house decorated?

WILSON: I think just flowers.

PARIS: Simply.

WILSON: Simply, very simply. It was just a really simple reception. Just lovely.

PARIS: And not all that many people there.

WILLIAMS: And I think you were invited to the dedication of the Truman Library?

WILSON: Now, I wasn't able to go to that. Were you?

PARIS: No.

WILSON: Yes, we were invited.

WILLIAMS: That's the guest list. I guess I was reading it to you on the phone.

WILSON: And Mother and Daddy went.

PARIS: Mother wouldn't have, would she? Did she go?

WILSON: Oh, I don't know.

PARIS: Would she have still . . . When was that?

WILLIAMS: Fifty-seven.

WILSON: Yeah, she would . . . She died in '59.

PARIS: Yeah, she would. I don't remember that. I mean, I—

WILSON: Well, I remember being invited, but I know that we weren't able to go.

PARIS: What time of the year was it?

WILSON: It was in the summer.

WILLIAMS: July the Fourth.

PARIS: I was in Europe then. That's the reason I didn't go.

WILLIAMS: It was very hot. So your side of the family was always on the guest list?

WILSON: Do you think Ann went to the dedication?

PARIS: She may have.

WILSON: I was just expecting Wells. I mean . . .

PARIS: Oh, yes, yes.

WILLIAMS: Where were you living?

WILSON: In Kansas City. I mean, we were in transition. John had just finished his internship, and he was getting ready to go into the Air Force.

WILLIAMS: Maybe we should talk about your family a little bit, your husband, and then you can . . .

WILSON: Okay, because I'm going to have to go. Okay. I have a wonderful family. [chuckling]

PARIS: She does.

WILLIAMS: I know, I get the picture every year. It's interesting. I'm envious because you were in Britain for a while.

WILSON: Oh, well, that was really neat. I wish you could have been, and someday. Well, John and I were married in '54, and we have three children: Wells, John Wells Wilson and William Strother Wilson and Louise Wilson. All family names.

PARIS: Louise Wilson Valuck.

WILSON: Louise Wilson Valuck now. And we have lived around various places. We lived here in Columbia for a number of years, and John was in private practice here of OB/GYN. Then he retired from his practice. Is this the sort of thing you want to . . .

WILLIAMS: Just catching us up to where you are now.

WILSON: Okay, and then he went into the Air Force about five years ago, and we've been to the academy for ten months and in England for three years, and are back now.

WILLIAMS: In Illinois?

WILSON: In Illinois, where he's at Scott Air Force Base.

WILLIAMS: Delivering babies?

WILSON: Delivering babies. Helping residents learn how.

WILLIAMS: Our chief ranger's husband works at Scott.

WILSON: Oh, really?

WILLIAMS: He's a medical . . . he flies in the planes with people as they're evacuated.

WILSON: Oh, a medical technician?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

WILSON: Yes, that's one of the missions there at Scott is they fly the Nightingales around, all over the world. Our children, do you want to know where they are? I don't know what you want. [chuckling] Well, our oldest son is a surgeon down in Brookhaven, Mississippi; and second son is in a kitchen renovation—new and old—business in Rockford, Illinois; and our daughter Louise just moved to Edmond, Oklahoma, where her husband's a resident in cardiology at the university.

WILLIAMS: I know your sons went to Westminster College.

WILSON: They did. They both went to Westminster and graduated from there, and we're delighted with Westminster. They went primarily because of it being a small, liberal arts college. When we were talking about it, did we mention the fact that Ann . . . When Churchill made his famous "iron curtain" speech, Ann went to that.

PARIS: She was here at the university at the time.

WILLIAMS: She was able to get invited?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Through Cousin Harry.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Who was there also.

PARIS: I think, actually, Cousin Bess got that for her. [chuckling] And, yes, and she went back this summer. She was here visiting, and it was the first time she'd been back over there, so she enjoyed it.

WILLIAMS: I used to work at the memorial.

PARIS: It's very well done, very well done.

WILLIAMS: It sounds like through the years it was to some advantage to have a cousin who was president, or former president.

WILSON: Oh, well—

WILLIAMS: Is it still of any advantage? Does it ever come up much? Do your children think anything of it?

PARIS: I think our generation of people have more understanding of it simply because they remember, and our children don't remember. And my children have a hard time getting the relationship straight sometimes.

WILSON: Mhm, I think that's—

PARIS: And just because they were not involved in it. And probably, as time goes on, it will be less important.

WILSON: Well, you know—

PARIS: But it was very important when we were growing up, I think.

WILSON: Really. And you know how organizations are always looking for programs? So when we were living here in Columbia, I got together one

time for—I think it was for my PEO group to begin with—a little talk about our visit to the White House, and you know, with some pictures and mementos. Well, these older ladies were intrigued with that, and so the word gets around, you know, “Well, so-and-so will give you a program.” And, I mean, I was booked for—

PARIS: You were on the circuit?

WILSON: Yeah. In fact, a lot of these . . . well, not a lot of them, but several of the ladies overlapped, and it was very embarrassing because it was a canned talk, but they were very interested in it. And I think you’re right, Bess, it was of more interest to that generation maybe than this younger generation. It’s hard for them to comprehend. They like the history of it and so forth, but as far as the relationships, I think it is hard to get it straight.

WILLIAMS: Would your life have been much different if Harry Truman never became president?

WILSON: Well, I don’t think so. [chuckling]

PARIS: I don’t think that’s, I don’t think that was—

WILSON: I don’t think any of the things that we achieved had anything to do with him. And I think we’re better for having had this family background, and I think the genes on the Gates side was a real gift to us, but that’s as far as I know.

PARIS: It was a wonderful opportunity, which it was nice to be able to take advantage of, but I think Helen expressed that very well otherwise.

WILLIAMS: I guess you really can’t plan on these things.

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: Being related to . . .

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: Unless you're a Kennedy or . . .

PARIS: No. [chuckling]

WILSON: Now, as far as I know, the only, now . . . You were speaking about did our family benefit by this prominent family relation. Now, I remember that Cousin Harry got Oscar a job in Washington.

PARIS: And Cousin Bess interceded when Cousin Helen Wallace . . . in the educational system. Not successfully, but I think she did try to find out what had happened.

WILSON: But, I mean, that had nothing to do with us.

WILLIAMS: They were doing that for their own generation.

WILSON: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Their cousins and . . .

PARIS: Yes, that's right. Before you leave, let's go back and talk about Bob Wells's wives.

WILSON: Oh, okay, right quick.

WILLIAMS: He had three?

WILSON: Three.

PARIS: Louise.

WILSON: First was Louise, another Louise, and she was a diabetic, so she died—

PARIS: Young.

WILSON: A child diabetic. And she was an absolutely wonderful musician.

PARIS: And pretty. Wasn't she very pretty?

WILSON: And beautiful. And she played the piano and had a wonderful voice, and terribly exciting, but it was short-lived. Then his next wife was Bernice, and they lived in St. Joe, Missouri, at that time.

PARIS: For most of the time, although he worked for the highway department, and they lived in Platte City some, and then they lived in Warsaw, I think, some.

WILSON: That's where he met Bernice.

WILLIAMS: Bernice [rhymes with "furnace"]? Like Bernice only pronounced—

WILSON: B-E-R-N-I-C-E. And they lived in St. Joe, I think, about all of their married life. She died, and then he married Carolyn . . . I can't think of her last name. She was a widow in St. Joe, and then they weren't married too long when Bob died. And Carolyn still is living, but we don't have any contact with her.

WILLIAMS: Why did they call him Bob?

WILSON: Well, first of all, when he was born being William Strother, Jr., they called him Baby.

PARIS: [chuckling] Oh, I'd forgotten that.

WILSON: And then, for about two years, and then decided that that wouldn't do, so they . . .

PARIS: They called him Bobby then. Probably Bobby came out of Baby.

WILSON: Baby, uh-huh.

PARIS: I don't know. I never heard that, but that . . .

WILLIAMS: I guess that's where I was confused when people were talking about

Bob Wells. There's no Robert in the family.

WILSON: Oh, yeah, well, that's it. I think that's how it came about.

PARIS: They called him Bobby, so I bet . . . I had forgotten the Baby, but I bet that's where that came from. And that just . . . because there doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason, does it?

WILSON: No. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, that explains who the Bobby was. Because in those pictures it said, "Bobby Wells."

WILSON: Yeah, that's Bobby.

WILLIAMS: I didn't make the connection.

PARIS: Junior.

WILLIAMS: So he had three wives and no children.

WILSON: No children.

PARIS: That's right.

WILLIAMS: And he stayed around Platte City and St. Joseph.

WILSON: Mhm. And he always worked for the state highway department.

WILLIAMS: What was he like as an uncle?

WILSON: Oh, he was sweet.

PARIS: He was sweet and fun.

WILSON: Uh-huh. Kind of quiet.

PARIS: Uh-huh. And I think he liked children. He liked us. He was very mild-mannered.

WILLIAMS: Well, you have to leave now.

WILSON: I have to leave.

WILLIAMS: Thank you for staying so long.

WILSON: Oh, well, thank you. Gosh, you guys are great.

WILLIAMS: Thanks.

WILSON: Nice to see you, and be sure and give your folks my best.

WILLIAMS: I will.

STONE: Nice to meet you.

WILSON: Best of luck to you, Steve.

PARIS: Scott.

WILSON: Scott, excuse me. [personal conversation - not transcribed]

PARIS: I'm going to tell stories on you, too. [chuckling]

WILSON: Well, send me a recording of the story.

WILLIAMS: Okay. You'll see it in the transcript.

PARIS: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Could you catch up on your family like Helen did?

PARIS: My family. I was married to Robert Paris in 1957, at which time we moved to West Plains, Missouri, where he had always lived, and we lived there until his death in 1989. And then I moved to Columbia in February of this year. We had three children: Ann Frances, who is now married to Clifford Jury and they live in Dallas, and they have a three-year-old daughter, Helen Frances; and then I have, we had a son Robert Gates, who lives in West Plains and is working for a bank there; and our third child is Samuel Wells, who works for Procter & Gamble and is presently in St. Louis.

WILLIAMS: And did you go to, you went to the University of Missouri?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was that typical of your family?

PARIS: Yes, yes, I would say so—all three of us did. And it was, we got a good education. You got growing experiences and maturing experiences, and you weren't too far away from home, and it was financially possible.

WILLIAMS: Were you all in the same sorority?

PARIS: Yes. We all happened to be president, as a matter of fact.

WILLIAMS: Those were the Kappas?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Kappa Alpha?

PARIS: Kappa Kappa Gamma.

WILLIAMS: Not the Thetas, Kappa Alpha Theta?

PARIS: No, you're right.

WILLIAMS: Those are the two we had at Westminster.

PARIS: That's right, and they are fairly new.

WILLIAMS: Only have had women there for ten years.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I guess it's more than ten years now.

PARIS: Well, when we were there this summer, we asked, and I think they said it was about ten years. Somehow I was surprised it had been that long, and the chapters, I guess, is maybe eight years old, or something such as that.

WILLIAMS: We didn't talk about your cousins George and Frank and Fred, Mrs. Truman's brothers. How much did you see them?

PARIS: Well, they usually, at the times we had our yearly or our family visits, they were usually came too, or were also there in Independence, living right there. It was a day of visiting. And our family kept in close contact with them as well. They were neat people. Now, Fred not so much, because they were gone, but George and Frank they always kept in close contact with. And Natalie was a Kappa and was probably very responsible for one reason Ann was.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. Do you know where she went to school?

PARIS: It seems to me like it was somewhere in Oklahoma, but I'm not sure.

WILLIAMS: Could you describe her? We have acquired Frank and Natalie's house, and we're acquiring George's house.

PARIS: Natalie was a—Frank was a very tall man, and Natalie was very tiny—very tiny—and she was a little more reserved than May. May was quite talkative, and also funny. And those are the significant differences I can remember. And then George was kind of quiet, because May usually did all the talking. Is that your interpretation, maybe?

WILLIAMS: Well, I didn't know George, but I've known May.

PARIS: Yes. George was a very handsome man.

WILLIAMS: Was he tall also?

PARIS: Well, he wasn't as tall as Frank; Frank was very tall, as I recall. Of course, that's kind of out of a child's eye. But George was not as tall as he was, but he was very dark and a very handsome man, as I remember. And they didn't look alike. In fact—Maybe Fred and George looked a little bit alike, but the rest of them, I didn't think there was really much

family resemblance; and there was no family resemblance, as far as I could tell, between my father and brothers and Aunt Louise and the families. There wasn't much. And I always understood that my grandmother Wells was a very small lady, and Aunt Madge was small when I remembered her, but probably not as small as our grandmother was.

WILLIAMS: Was Frank a happy person, or quiet, or . . . ?

PARIS: Well, I don't know. I don't have any memory of . . . any feelings about that.

WILLIAMS: Would you be in their houses, or would you—

PARIS: Yes, we would go down and visit with them. You made all three houses usually. [chuckling] And they usually—either one and/or all of them, some of them came, then went to Platte City at the same time.

WILLIAMS: Margaret seemed to favor her Aunt May. Did you have any favorite one over the other?

PARIS: No, I really can't say that I did, but I could see why probably Margaret . . . She lived longer, for another thing, and then, she was just a little looser than Natalie.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have any contact with the Truman side of the family, like the ones across the street there in Independence?

PARIS: No. Harry Truman's brother, Vivian, I probably we met him or saw him one time, maybe. I mean, I remember that. His sister, Mary Jane, now I remember her, and I don't know where, but I remember seeing her at some juncture.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any impression of what she was like?

PARIS: Well, I think she was a very lovely lady, as I recall; but, there again, it's pretty spartan.

WILLIAMS: And did you ever meet his mother?

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: What have I left out? It seems like we've kind of jumped around.

PARIS: We certainly have.

STONE: Yes.

WILLIAMS: We really haven't talked about your parents too much, of what they were like as people.

PARIS: I'm glad you asked, because they were delightful people. Our father was a rather serious man, and yet he had a wonderful sense of humor. He loved puns, and he . . . I was the last one, and they teased me unmercifully. But he was the only man, so the home revolved around him, but Mother was the one who ran the home, certainly. Daddy came in and sat down. And they were very devoted to each other, very devoted to each other. And our mother had a graciousness that probably I have never . . . don't know of in any other person. She was charming and gracious and, there again, instilled a sense of loyalty that probably she got from Daddy too, because he had that same sense of loyalty. And they were very devoted to their family. And their girls, they were very proud of, which gave us . . . They gave us a lot of self-confidence, I think, probably.

WILLIAMS: Was your mother from Platte City?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What was her full name?

PARIS: Annie Loretta Morton Wells.

WILLIAMS: And she went by?

PARIS: Annie.

WILLIAMS: My mother's name is Loretta.

PARIS: Oh, really? She always kind of liked to hide that, but we did know that.

WILLIAMS: My mother has a first name that's even worse.

PARIS: [chuckling] So Loretta was the less of the two.

WILLIAMS: Right. What did your father do for a living?

PARIS: He was in the bank.

WILLIAMS: The Wells Bank?

PARIS: The Wells Bank. He did not, he was an employee until late in his life, and then he obtained control, but for only very short years before he died.

WILLIAMS: Does that bank go way back in Platte City history?

PARIS: Yes, but I can't tell you exactly how long. I guess our grandfather and, I think, his brother were in it, and beyond that, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: And the Wells family is from Platte City?

PARIS: Yes, and there has been a Wells in there, although they did not necessarily own it.

WILLIAMS: And do you have a lot of Wells cousins around there?

PARIS: None. Bill Wells was the only Wells boy, and he had girls. And he's now deceased, and so we only have . . . There were only five—I mean

six grandchildren—and so Wells and his brother Pete, or Lee, are the only cousins we have on the Wells side.

WILLIAMS: Did the first William Strother have brothers and sisters that . . .

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Would there would be Wellses from that? Distant cousins?

PARIS: Katherine Wells was William Campbell's daughter, I think—now this is where we need Ann—and he had, William Campbell had Katherine and William, and I don't know what Billy's middle name was. And they both died early. And neither one of them was married, well, let's see, Katherine had Betty Jane. And she would have been our father's cousin, second cousin. But no, there weren't very, obviously there weren't many that we knew very well.

[End #4374; Begin #4375]

PARIS: And Katherine also died very young.

WILLIAMS: So, did you know Theodore Boulware Wallace?

PARIS: Yes, I remember him. He was a very prominent lawyer in Kansas City, but he was an elderly man when I knew him, certainly.

WILLIAMS: It looks like he was quite old when he died.

PARIS: Yes, I think probably he was, because I remembered him as an elderly man.

WILLIAMS: Was he still living down there on—

PARIS: Gladstone? Mhm.

WILLIAMS: In a big house.

PARIS: A beautiful big house.

WILLIAMS: Would you be down there as much as you were in Independence?

PARIS: Probably not. Might have been about the same time—you know, maybe once or twice a year.

WILLIAMS: Would he come up to Platte City?

PARIS: Oh, I don't remember his coming very often. I'm sure he did, but I don't remember it.

WILLIAMS: And you said he had a nickname?

PARIS: "Bowler." We called him Uncle "Bowler."

WILLIAMS: Hmm. I guess he was an uncle?

PARIS: Yes, he was a great uncle.

WILLIAMS: Seems like a lot of the Gates family is buried there in Independence. Do you ever remember going to funerals?

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: And I suppose your . . . the Wellses are up in Platte City?

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Is there a family cemetery?

PARIS: No, there's just a plot.

WILLIAMS: In the . . . ? What's the name?

PARIS: In the Platte City cemetery.

WILLIAMS: In case we ever wanted to go up and look around, we could find it.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And his children were Helen and John Wallace?

PARIS: Yes, and I always thought it was interesting that Myra and Madge both married Wallaces who were not related. That would be very confusing, I

would think, to historians.

WILLIAMS: Right, it was for us. Back when I was doing the article on Westminster and the connections with the Trumans, Maud's family had connections, and T.B. had brothers, I think, that all went there, and he may have even gone there. I don't remember. So, he had all these Wallaces, but . . .

PARIS: They were not related.

WILLIAMS: Telling people they weren't related, but they were all from around Kansas City.

PARIS: Yes, that is very confusing.

WILLIAMS: It was for me, and I think I eventually—

PARIS: And Helen Wallace never married, and John Wallace was married, divorced, and has Myra Sue.

WILLIAMS: And she's the one in California?

PARIS: Yes. Her last name has left me, but I'll come up with it in a minute.

WILLIAMS: At Margaret's wedding, it says . . . I guess these were people that, I guess, were there: Mrs. Lee C. Hull.

PARIS: That was Aunt Louise.

WILLIAMS: David F. Wallace from New Mexico.

PARIS: That would have been . . .

WILLIAMS: David.

PARIS: David, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you have contact with him through the years?

PARIS: No. No, I guess I saw him there. As I told you earlier, I thought I probably him last when I was thirteen or fifteen, but I guess I saw him

then.

WILLIAMS: At Margaret's wedding, were you in the church or just the reception?

PARIS: No, just the reception. Mother, Daddy, and Aunt Louise were invited to the wedding. That generation was invited to the wedding, and the rest of us were invited to the reception.

WILLIAMS: What did you do while the wedding was going on?

PARIS: I think maybe we went in different cars. I think maybe they went prior to Ann and Helen and Norman and John and I going.

WILLIAMS: There was Mr. and Mrs. W. Gates Wells.

PARIS: That was our father.

WILLIAMS: Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Wells.

PARIS: That was Bob and Bernice.

WILLIAMS: Oscar Wells.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Miss Helen Wallace.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Sounds like all of your aunts and uncles.

PARIS: Mhm. The cousins. Yes, because there again, that goes back to Cousin Bess kept in touch with all those people, and they were family.

WILLIAMS: It just wasn't peculiar to your branch of the family that you went.

PARIS: I don't think so, I don't know. I don't know that.

WILLIAMS: And you don't really know much about Myra, Madge, and Maud's brothers, G. Walter . . .

PARIS: I don't, no.

WILLIAMS: Because he had a son who lived out in Portland, Oregon.

PARIS: We were asking Ann about that last weekend—or when we were with her last week—about G. Walter Gates, and she said that was one strain of the family that she was . . . had never been followed up on very much. He had a son, G. Walter had a son, and what was his name?

WILLIAMS: I think it was Walter.

PARIS: Walter II, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: When G. Walter Gates died, the pallbearers were John Wallace, Gates Wells, Frank Wallace, George Wallace, Fred Wallace, and Harry Truman.

PARIS: When did he die?

WILLIAMS: Nineteen twenty-three. [reading] The funeral was at the home of Mrs. George P. Gates, 219 North Delaware Street. Somewhere it said something about they brought his body back from Oregon. He's buried there, but that seems to be one side of the Gates family that . . . There he is. No, he was in Coronado, California. "A Portland lumberman," it says. We just wondered if there were Gateses out there.

PARIS: All right, his son G. Walter Gates and a daughter Maud Louise Drake, who resides in the East. Now, I can remember our dad referring to her.

WILLIAMS: There's another Maud Louise.

PARIS: There's Maud Louise, right.

WILLIAMS: Obviously named after her aunt.

PARIS: Her aunt.

WILLIAMS: And your grandmother.

PARIS: And my grandmother. We were all very grateful we were not named Maud. And I think Cousin Bess kept in contact with these people, particularly after they went to Washington, because I think she . . . This says she was in the East, and I think she was maybe in the Washington area. But I have a feeling that maybe she's been dead a long time.

WILLIAMS: Well, she would have been Bess's generation.

PARIS: Yes, yes. And I say, I think I can remember Daddy and Bess having some kind of discussion, but I don't know.

WILLIAMS: You were named specifically after Bess Truman?

PARIS: I had, my mother had a sister named Elizabeth also, whom they called Elizabeth, and she died right after I was born, or maybe right before I was born. Anyway, maybe that was the significance in why I was named for her. But at the same time, I was named for Cousin Bess, and there was another Elizabeth friend in Platte City who was named Bess, and I was named sort of, so it was whoever was convenient, you know.
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Whoever was there.

PARIS: They liked the name Elizabeth, which I have never used.

WILLIAMS: It's always been Bess?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: But Bess Truman was the only one who went by Bess?

PARIS: That's right. This friend in Platte City was Bess, and I don't know even . . . I guess she was Elizabeth; she may not have been. So it was sort of a group.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever feel particularly close to Bess Truman because you had the same names?

PARIS: Well, yes. Yes, I would say so.

WILLIAMS: When she was first lady and you were twelve years old?

PARIS: Yes. Yes, that's rather significant. [chuckling] And I think that's perhaps how we came about by exchanging Christmas presents, and there was a closeness there that . . . a bond.

WILLIAMS: Now that I know where you live, I'll have to hunt up that gift card or book that has "To Bess, from Bess," or "Love, Bess."

PARIS: Right. I wish you would because that would be kind of . . . I may have done it one year and then didn't the next, or . . .

WILLIAMS: And you were the only other Bess in the family?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: There were several Louises.

PARIS: Yes.

WILLIAMS: One Helen? Helen Wallace.

PARIS: Helen Wallace and then Helen Wells. And, yes.

WILLIAMS: Two Helens.

PARIS: Yes, there was no other Bess.

WILLIAMS: Okay, well, that helps.

PARIS: It's sort of a unique name, actually. There are not very many Besses in this day and age.

WILLIAMS: It's a nice name.

PARIS: I hated it when I was growing up, but it's a very easy name to write, as

opposed to Elizabeth, which is a very difficult name to write.

WILLIAMS: My parents named my oldest sister Lizabeth, with no *E* on it. That's caused her no end of trouble.

PARIS: Oh, Lizabeth.

WILLIAMS: Lizabeth. Like Elizabeth without the *E*.

PARIS: Yeah. Oh, yes, that would have been a lifetime . . .

WILLIAMS: And everybody wants to write it Elizabeth.

PARIS: Sure.

WILLIAMS: She goes by Beth, anyway. Maybe Bess would have been . . .

PARIS: It's just simpler sometimes.

WILLIAMS: Well . . .

PARIS: Well, you're very thorough.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

PARIS: And I'm sorry . . . I feel like we just have hung things out here that we don't . . .

WILLIAMS: You might want to look at these. I don't know if you'll know any of these people.

PARIS: Because I really . . . My memory is very vague.

WILLIAMS: This is the latest one—it's in the thirties. These are pictures we found recently—we'd known they were there, but they're being catalogued now—of people.

PARIS: Those two look alike.

WILLIAMS: Those look like Mrs. Truman's generation.

PARIS: I see, and those two men look alike.

WILLIAMS: Well, it's a double exposure.

PARIS: Oh, I guess that's the reason. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I'll just read the note here: "A wedding tableau." I guess they did that back then. Now, on this next one you—

PARIS: Now, that's Cousin Bess, isn't it?

WILLIAMS: Well you can really tell on this one.

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Do you recognize any of the other . . . ?

PARIS: Huh-uh.

WILLIAMS: That's not very good.

PARIS: No, these are all just . . .

WILLIAMS: Looks like back when she was a teenager and in the twenties.

PARIS: Do they know who that is?

WILLIAMS: No, nothing. It doesn't look familiar to you, or the neighborhood doesn't?

PARIS: Huh-uh.

WILLIAMS: I wish we had a picture of your . . . the Wells house up in . . . I'll have to go up there and do that.

PARIS: Yes, because it's a pretty house, and Wells and . . . they have done a lot to it—restored it. They kept it. And it's Victorian, which . . . All these people don't . . . this is all . . .

WILLIAMS: I think there's some in here of . . . I think that's . . .

PARIS: We don't even have very many pictures of our parents as young people or . . . A tennis match.

WILLIAMS: I think that's on the . . . Well, somebody thought that was the carriage house we have now, behind the Truman house, and there's a vacant lot. I suppose it could be up in Platte City, but I don't know.

PARIS: I don't think it was. My recollection of the tennis court is just that: It was a lot. Now, where were these found? In the attic?

WILLIAMS: They were in an album.

PARIS: In the attic?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

PARIS: The attic. Have you gotten it cleaned out?

STONE: Pretty much.

WILLIAMS: Most of the photographs were taken by the Truman Library before we arrived, so that they would have them for the public to see. They're better at handling researchers, are better equipped at it, have more practice.

PARIS: Now, that's on the back steps, isn't it? The back porch?

WILLIAMS: Of the Truman . . . ?

PARIS: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: I don't think so. It's just one of . . .

PARIS: Is there something else there?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

PARIS: Good try.

WILLIAMS: It looks like their faces are . . .

PARIS: They did funny things like that back when. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I'm sure these are way before . . .

PARIS: This is somebody's baby in a big wicker rocker. Cost a fortune then, didn't it.

WILLIAMS: Postmarked—it's a postcard, I guess, or something—Garver. Is that a Wells?

PARIS: I have no idea. None that matured to anything I look like, that I knew.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any contact . . . These are trips out West, San Diego. Is there any reason . . .

PARIS: No.

WILLIAMS: You said your grandmother would go to Colorado. I think we thought maybe these were one of those trips that they took out West. These are Captain Truman in World War I. And pictures that he took. Did you have any family in the military? [adjusting Paris's microphone] This has come undone.

PARIS: Oh, it's undone? Oh. No. My mother's brother was in the military in World War I, but my father didn't make it. I mean, he was right in the age . . . too young, and his brothers then didn't either.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'd like to thank you for letting us come by today.

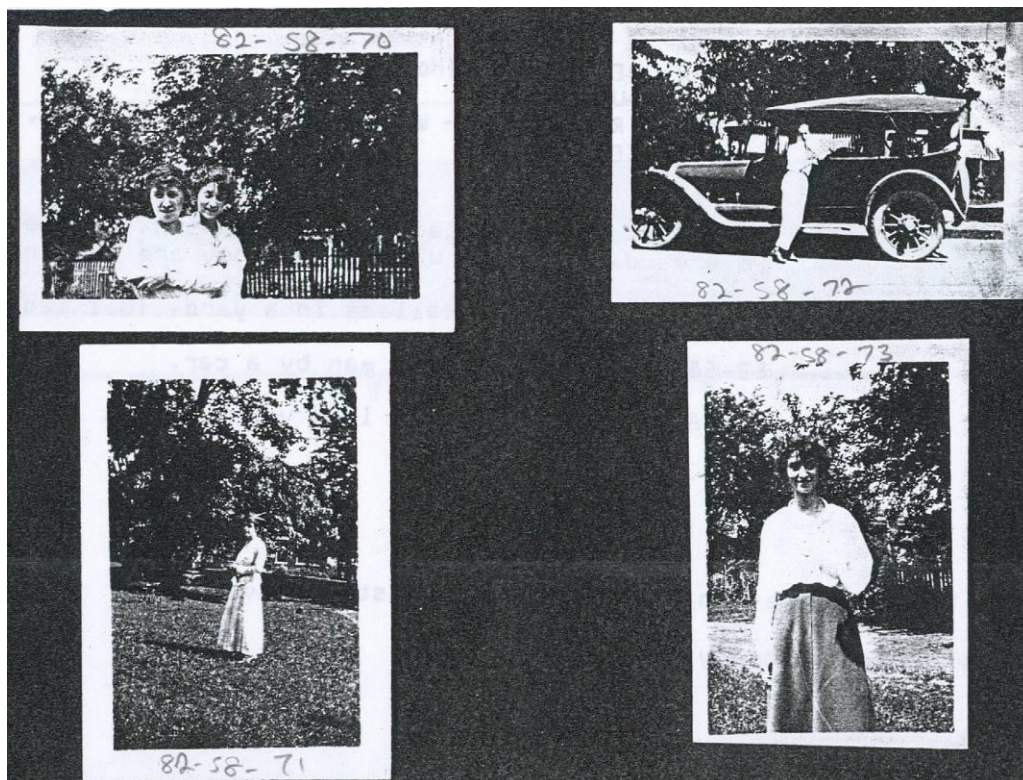
END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Harry S. Truman Library photo #84-63. At the time of this interview, the HSTL caption read: "Photo of large, old Victorian house, with a picket fence around it. In the yard stand, L to R: Maud Gates Wells, Madge Gates Wallace, and Maud's husband, Strother Wells. Maud Gates Wells is the sister of Madge Gates Wallace."



2. Harry S. Truman Library photos #82-58-70 through 73. At the time of the interview, the HSTL captions read:
- “82-58-70: Bess Wallace and her cousin, Louise Wells, in a yard, from the waist up. They are hugging.
- “82-58-71: Natalie Wallace in a yard, full length.
- “82-58-72: Unidentified man by a car.
- “82-58-73: Louise Wells in a yard, almost full length.”
- These photographs came from the Truman home in an album entitled “Postal Souvenirs.”



3. Harry S. Truman Library photos #82-58-74 through 77. At the time of the interview, the HSTL captions read:

“82-58-74: Unidentified man in front of a car. The car appears to be parked in front of the Truman house. It is summer.

“82-58-75: Unidentified man (a cousin) on crutches, probably in yard of the Truman house.

“82-58-76: L to R: Fred Wallace, Louise Wells, and Madge Gates Wallace in yard of Truman house.

“82-58-77: George Wallace by car in the yard of Truman house.”

These photographs came from the Truman home in an album entitled “Postal Souvenirs.”



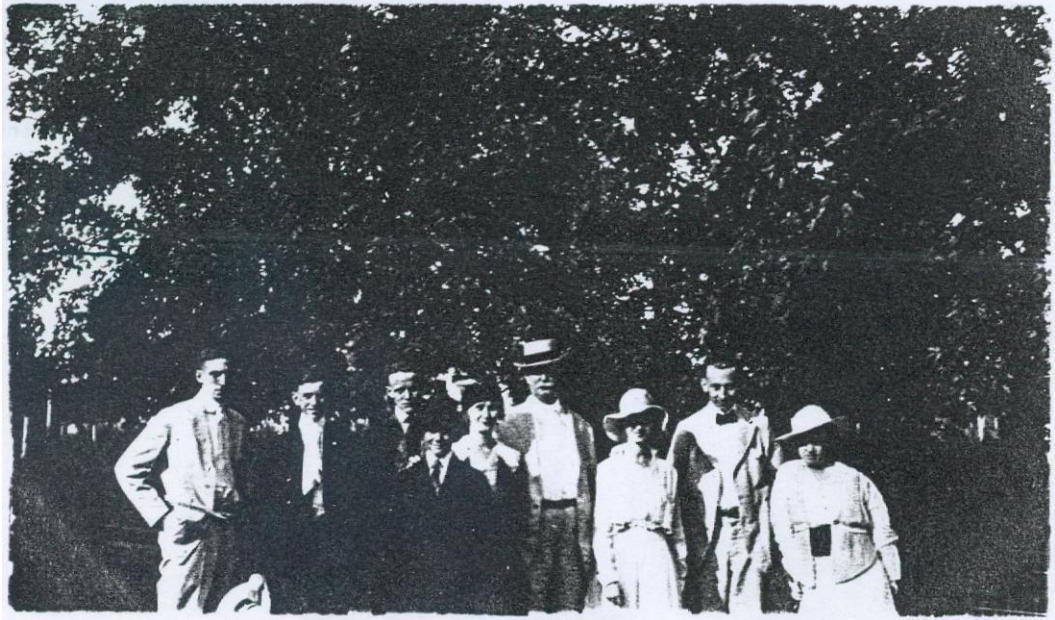
4. Harry S. Truman Library photo #82-265. At the time of the interview, the HSTL caption read: "Snapshot, full-length, of a man and a woman standing in a yard. They are unidentified. May, 1928." This photograph came from the Truman house.



5. Harry S. Truman Library photo #82-288-1 thru 3. At the time of this interview, the HSTL caption read: "Bess Wallace and her cousins from Platte City, Missouri. L to R: Oscar Wells, George Wallace, Helen Wallace, John Wallace, Bob Wells, Louise Wells, Frank Wallace, Bess Wallace, unidentified man, Maud Louise Gates, Fred Wallace, Frank Gates (brother of Maud Louise Gates and Madge Gates)." These photos are from original negatives found in the Truman home.



6. Harry S. Truman Library photo #82-58-53. At the time of this interview, the HSTL caption read: "Bess Wallace with a group of her relatives from Platte City, Missouri. L to R: George Wallace, Gates Wells, unidentified Wells boy, Bobby Wells, Louise Wells, Strother Wells, Helen Wallace, John Wallace, Bess Wallace." This photograph came from the Truman home in an album entitled "Postal Souvenirs."



7. Harry S. Truman Library photo #82-259. At the time of the interview, the HSTL caption read: "Snapshot of five young women posing in a yard, all wearing long dresses and hats. Bess Wallace is second from the right, and Louise Wells is second from the left." This photograph came from the Truman home.



8. Harry S. Truman Library photo #82-58-57. At the time of this interview, the HSTL caption read: "Group of girlfriends standing on a lawn. L to R: Louise Wells, two unidentified women, Bess Wallace, Katherine Wells. This was taken in Platte City, Missouri." This photograph came from the Truman home in an album entitled "Postal Souvenirs."



9. Obituary of Maud Gates Wells, December 1934, unidentified newspaper, Harry S. Truman Library vertical file, Gates/Wallace Genealogy.

December 1934 PLATTE CITY

MRS. WELLS DIES

Mrs. Maud Gates Wells died at the Missouri-Methodist hospital in St. Joseph Saturday, December 22, 1934. Mrs. Wells developed double pneumonia and was taken to the hospital Wednesday where she might receive better attention, but advanced years and frailty of constitution baffled medical care and her soul passed into eternity as the rising sun peeped over the eastern horizon to welcome a new day and angel voices sang to welcome into her eternal home another good citizen.

Maud Louise Gates was the daughter of Elizabeth Emery and George P. Gates and was born in Port Byron, Illinois, February 23, 1864. Later she lived in Kansas City and Independence, Mo. She grew to womanhood in the attainment of a splendid education, culture and talent. October 19, 1893, she was married to William Strother Wells and has since that date been a resident of Platte City. Mr. Wells died July 23, 1924. To them were born three sons and a daughter: Mrs. Louise Wells Hull, W. Gates Wells, Oscar Wells, and W. S. (Bob) Wells, Jr., all of whom survive the mother. She also leaves one sister, Mrs. David Wallace of Independence; two grandsons, Lee C. Hull, Jr., and James Wells Hull; two granddaughters, Ann Louise and Helen Wells.

Mrs. Wells was a lovely woman in charitableness, hospitality and graciousness. Her home was her castle and here she found most of her joys—caring little to leave its precincts. Those visiting the home were always welcomed heartily and entertained with good old-fashioned hospitality, leaving with impression they had been welcomed and their visit enjoyed by this splendid hostess. So quiet was Mrs. Wells' life and so retiring her nature, only a few really knew her, but these few loved her and sensed her fine character and womanliness. To her family she was a devoted and wonderful mother, guiding, caring for, loving them day by day, with that gentleness and purity that sought for them worthy manhood and womanhood. She was a Presbyterian in church membership and a Christian woman in act and precept.

The funeral was held at the family home in Platte City Sunday afternoon, conducted by Rev. J. C. House. A large crowd from the community, other towns of Platte county and nearby cities. Burial was in Platte City cemetery, the funeral being under direction of L. F. Rollins.

Following this sketch, we print a tribute to Mrs. Wells by one who knew her and was associated with her in many ways, that tells the story of this good woman.

A Tribute

"Friend after friend departs." It is the unalterable decree of the Omnipotent, for He says, "It is appointed unto all men once to die. But when that departure is that of a dear and valued friend, how dark are the shadows that O'ercast our sky! how sorely saddened our hearts! In the death of Mrs. Wells not only those listed as her personal friends, but the community at large loses one of the rarest natures with which it has been blest. When we read in His word, "Let her adorning be that of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price," we read her description. Gentleness characterized her movements, her speech, her mien.

"Her air, her manner, all who saw admired, Courteous..... and gentle though retired."

And, quoting Shakespeare, "Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low,—an excellent thing in woman."

We could mention many inherent delicacies of nature characterizing this admirable woman,—evidencing her, "one to the manner born,"—but what is of more value, was her possession, besides gentleness, of which we have spoken,—of many other of the graces of the Spirit, particularly, love, peace, good and faith.

Her home was, usually, the home of our little Missionary Society, there it was, most of our meetings were held. And her contributions to the cause it represented and to all benevolences, were added liberally and cheerfully.

I take it, somehow, that her sons and daughter kept her supplied, always, with choice confections, of which she was fond, and these she invariably handed us with her ineffable charm and graciousness.

That daughter,—sole daughter of her home and heart,—now lies ill in a hospital. We pray, God, in His mercy, will soon raise her from her bed of languishing and restore her to her home in health and strength.

Yes, we are bereft of a choice spirit, a lovely Christian character, but trust that He who makes no mistakes will console us, her friends; sustain by His grace her children,—as one whom his mother comforteth may He comfort them,—and, finally, re-unite us with her in His presence, where there is fullness of joy and at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

—Phoebe M. Paxton